

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MARKETING EFFORTS ON CONSUMERS: THE ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE

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Abstract: Marketers try to create behavioral changes by sending messages to the customers. Sometimes various institutions and governments also present some messages in order to raise awareness on social issues. These kind of marketing efforts are associated with social marketing. Social marketing campaigns involve messages such as giving up smoking, avoid using alcohol etc. In this study, it is aimed to determine the major effects of social marketing efforts on consumers' behaviors and thoughts. In order to find out these effects, the Ice Bucket Challenge campaign was employed. In this research content analysis was applied to evaluate the consumers' thoughts in Turkey. For that purpose, various dictionaries such as "Eksi Sozluk", "ITU Sozluk" and "Uludag Sozluk" were used. Frequency analyses were performed to analyze the consumers' thoughts about Ice Bucket Challenge. At the end of the study it was determined that Ice Bucket Challenge campaign influenced the consumers in different ways.

Keywords: Marketing, Social Marketing, Consumers

Introduction

Especially in recent years, firms and associations have started to focus on the long term benefits and the welfare of the society. These key points affect the marketing activities of the businesses. Social marketing gets more importance in the marketing programs of the firms. Social marketing campaigns enable to attract the attention of the customers to the topics related with social subjects such as giving up smoking, drawing attention to healthy nutrition, discouraging society from drinking alcohol and drugs, environmental protection etc. In other words, for the well-being of society, marketers have started to promote some ideas as well as goods and services. At this point, proper planning of social marketing campaigns, which can easily draw the attention of the consumers become more important. This study investigates how social marketing campaigns affect the consumers' thoughts, beliefs and attitudes in Turkey. To determine these effects well-known social marketing campaign, the Ice Bucket Challenge is used. The study reveals the influences of the Ice Bucket Challenge campaign on consumers. For this purpose, most famous dictionaries such as "Eksi Sozluk", "ITU Sozluk" and "Uludag Sozluk" were used to introduce the thoughts of the consumers. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, social marketing is introduced. Next, it is highlighted how and for which purposes Ice Bucket Challenge campaign is publicized. Further, content analysis is used in order to state the consumers' thoughts and feelings about the campaign. Finally, the results and the impacts of the campaign are highlighted.

Social Marketing

Social marketing is the concept appeared in the early 1970s. In the emergence of this concept; Levy, Zaltman and Kotler have contributed a lot. They advocated that by the help of the social marketing programs, it is possible for consumers to adopt the social ideas that the businesses try to present. As a matter of fact, the major aim of the social marketing efforts is to influence the target consumers' behavior to increase the welfare of the society (Saunders, Barrington & Sridharan, 2015).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, health sector have benefited from the social marketing efforts. In the 1980s, especially health promotion campaigns were frequently used to promote health. Furthermore, many campaigns were emerged such as anti-tobacco campaign, campaigns related with obesity etc. (Singaiah & Laskar, 2015)

In the literature it is possible to find several definitions on social marketing. According to Kotler and Zaltman (1971: 5) "social marketing is the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research." Andreasen (1995: 7) defined that "social marketing is the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society." Lefebvre (2013: 4) stated that "social marketing is the application of the marketing discipline to social

issues and causes that provides a framework for developing innovative solutions to social problems that have long perplexed and frustrated us.”

The keys of creating successful social marketing programs require focusing on the major benchmarks, including the following:

- Behavior change
- Consumer research
- Segmentation and targeting
- Exchange
- Competition
- Marketing mix

Behavior change is one of the aims of social marketing efforts. The major goal of the social marketing effort is to create behavioral changes after the campaign was presented to the target consumers. Besides, formative research must be made to understand the values of the consumers. Focus groups, interviews are some of the data collection methods in consumer research. This research enables to pretest the intervention elements with the target group. Segmentation and targeting are the important parts of the social marketing efforts since target group is selected according to the various segmentation variables like age, income etc. An exchange criterion is also important to reveal the motivating factors. It is known that the motivating factors can be either tangible or intangible. In other words, after participating to a social marketing campaign consumer can gain rewards or only personal satisfaction can be provided after the attendance. Competition is the benchmark related with analyzing the internal and external forces that creates the behavioral changes. The last criteria, marketing mix, is related with the application of marketing mix elements such as product, price, place and promotion (Stead, Gordon, Angus & McDermott, 2007; Luca & Suggs, 2010).

It is understood that social marketing activities are more different from business marketing activities. The reason is that in business marketing, artificial preferences are the main subject of the marketing activities whereas in social marketing society’s welfare and beliefs get more importance in the marketing activities of the businesses. In other words, social marketing is the efficient and striking way of creating society’s concern to the social issues and also can be regarded as a good option in performing the social objectives (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971).

The Ice Bucket Challenge

Ice Bucket Challenge is an important campaign started on July 2014 to create awareness on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) disease. ALS is the motor neuron disease which causes the muscles to be damaged. In ALS, sensory nerves work well whereas the patients cannot be able to command voluntary muscles (Handa & Ebisawa, 2008).

The aim of the Ice Bucket Challenge campaign was either donating money to ALS Association or uploading a video on social media. To promote awareness of this disease, plenty of people have dumped a bucket of ice and water on their heads.



Figure 1.The Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign.

Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign is the interesting way to draw people’s attention to ALS disease. The campaign has attracted many people’s attention and more than 17 million people share their videos in social media. Hereby, 440 million people watched these videos a total of 10 billion times. Especially the celebrities have important contributions in attracting interest to the campaign all over the world. Owing to this campaign, ALS Association has received \$ 115 million in 2014 (<http://www.alsa.org/about-als/>, 27.06.2016).

Results and Discussions

A content analysis was used in order to investigate the consumers' thoughts about Ice Bucket Challenge. To determine these thoughts online dictionaries such as "Eksi Sozluk", "Uludag Sozluk" and "ITU Sozluk" were used. Content analysis is a research methodology that is used to codify the existing texts according to fewer content categories (Stemler, 2001).

The population of the study is Turkish online dictionaries whereas the sample of the study includes three most popular Turkish dictionaries called "Eksi Sozluk", "Uludag Sozluk" and "ITU Sozluk". These dictionaries were searched according to the keyword "Ice Bucket Challenge". Entries between July 2014 and October 2014 were taken into consideration just because these dates are the most popular times of the campaign. It was determined that 585 entries were made between this period of time (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of the Ice Bucket Challenge entries in online dictionaries between July 2014 and October 2014.

Dictionary	Number of the Entries
Eksi Sozluk	298
Uludag Sozluk	127
ITU Sozluk	160
Total Entries	585

In the study three basic questions were examined. These questions can be listed as follows:

- What are the feelings of the consumers about the Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign?
- How the consumers' feelings about the Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign change within the considered time interval?
- Which phrases are frequently encountered in entries related with the Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign?

The descriptive statistics about the first question is given in Table 2. Entries for each dictionary were grouped as "positive feelings", "neutral feelings" and "negative feelings". It is found that the majority of the dictionary authors have negative opinions about the campaign. Among the dictionaries analyzed, "Uludag Sozluk" entries are found to have the highest number of negative entries while "Eksi Sozluk" contains the lowest number of negative entries. On the other hand, "Eksi Sozluk" has the highest number of positive feelings among all. Besides, it is shown that the minority of the dictionary authors have neutral feelings about the Ice Bucket Challenge Campaign.

Table 2: Feelings of the consumers about Ice Bucket Challenge.

Dictionary	Positive Feelings		Neutral Feelings		Negative Feelings	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Eksi Sozluk	98	32,9	52	17,4	148	49,7
Uludag Sozluk	16	12,6	19	15	92	72,4
ITU Sozluk	40	25	38	23,8	82	51,2

The dictionary entries were also analyzed in terms of cumulative counts. The following figures (Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4) illustrate the line plots of cumulative counts related to positive, neutral and negative feelings. In these figures, horizontal axes refer to the sequence of dictionary entries in chronological order while the vertical axes indicate the cumulative counts. It is observed that positive feelings are shown to be dominant nearly in all dictionaries in former entries. However, in latter entries, negative feelings tend to surpass the others. This can be explained that the campaign was found to be creative and attractive by society in the beginning. However, as time passes, the campaign was criticized due to some negative aspects such as waste of time, waste of water and regarding this campaign as a show especially after the attendance of celebrities.

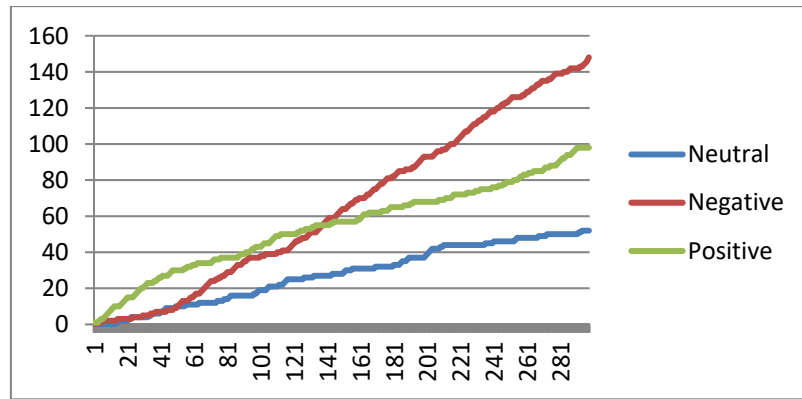


Figure 2. Cumulative count of the feelings for “Eksi Sozluk”.

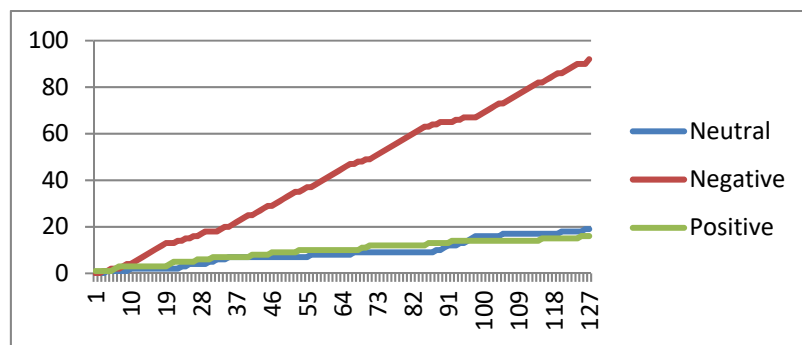


Figure 3. Cumulative count of the feelings for “Uludag Sozluk”.

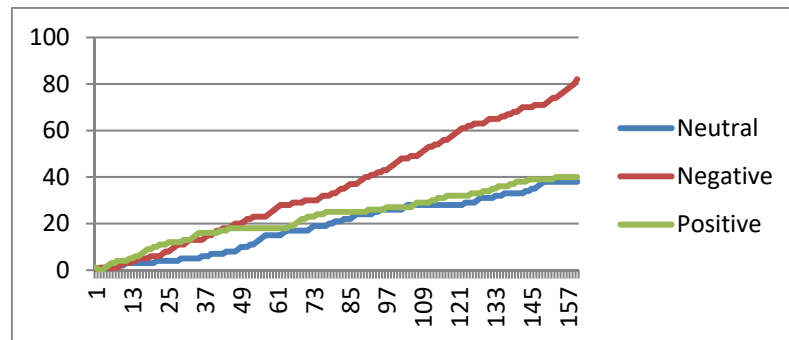


Figure 4. Cumulative count of the feelings for “ITU Sozluk”.

The frequently used phrases were analyzed to answer the last research question. The phrases were determined after a preliminary work and chosen as distinguishing as possible. The list of phrases and their frequencies for each online dictionary are shown in Table 3. “Raise awareness” is the most encountered phrase among the entries of three dictionaries. On the other hand, “social responsibility project” is the rarely encountered phrase. The phrases such as “raise awareness”, “fun” and “charity” can be observed as the most frequently encountered phrases taking place in positive feelings. Similarly, “show”, “advertisement” and “waste of water” are the prominent phrases contained within negative feelings.

Table 3: Frequently used phrases about Ice Bucket Challenge.

Phrases	Eksi Sozluk	ITU Sozluk	Uludag Sozluk	Total
<i>Raise Awareness</i>	57	45	27	129
<i>Fun</i>	48	21	15	84
<i>Charity</i>	37	14	11	62
<i>Show</i>	23	23	12	58
<i>Advertisement</i>	31	8	12	51
<i>Admirable</i>	37	9	4	50
<i>Popular</i>	14	13	10	37
<i>Sensibility</i>	22	5	7	34
<i>Trend</i>	10	3	5	18
<i>Waste of Water</i>	11	5	0	16
<i>Bad</i>	10	1	0	11
<i>Unnecessary</i>	2	2	5	9
<i>Efficient</i>	4	2	0	6
<i>Social Responsibility Project</i>	0	3	0	3

Conclusion

Social marketing has an important role to attract the awareness of the society to the social problems and issues. In this study, Ice Bucket Challenge was examined to state the society's feelings about the campaign. For this purpose, three famous online dictionaries called "Eksi Sozluk", "ITU Sozluk" and "Uludag Sozluk" were analyzed. It was found that 26% of the entries have positive opinions about the campaign while 55% and 19% of the entries have negative and neutral opinions, respectively. It is revealed that the general opinion converges to negative feelings about the campaign. The negative feelings reflected by the dictionary authors are mainly based on excessive water usage, turning out to be a show instead of a campaign etc. On the other hand, it is appeared that the campaign has several positive aspects such as drawing attention to a disease, collecting donations etc. As a future work, involving the large variety of dictionaries (national and international) might be useful to enrich the present study and following similar studies.

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